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ABSTRACT

Good nutrition and adequate nutritious food are not only essential to good health but also represent the difference between life and death. Nutrition is the world's number one problem today, along with war and population control. Good nutrition means providing, with care and love, all 45 essential nutrients in adequate amounts to each child -- one of the best signs of a civilized society. School food service personnel should work in their communities to get the nutritional message to all school children and to convince citizens of the need in every district for free school food services and knowledgeable nutrition consultants. (Author)

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Outline of talk given August 4, 1971
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American School Food Service Association
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CHILDREN'S NEEDS -- FOR UNIVERSAL FOOD SERVICE AND NUTRITION

by

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There is much malnutrition in this country, unfortunately. It shows up in many different ways, such as hunger and outright nutrient deficiencies, high incidences of anemia, increased infections, underweight and overweight, severe dental problems, reduced growth, needless problems in pregnancy and with infants, shortened life spans, and in behavioral and even mental problems in children and persons of all ages.

These, along with still other problems very closely associated with malnutrition in the rich and poor alike -- such as diabetes, heart disease, alcoholism, absenteeism, and other problems indirectly related, in part, to poor nutrition -- are very costly to our nation. I estimate these total costs related to poor nutrition to be as much as 30 billion dollars a year, or slightly over one-fourth of our total annual food bill (and nearly one-half of our total health care costs). This total cost of malnutrition is six times the cost of feeding all our nation's children in school food programs.

This is a needless and even disgraceful situation. My purpose here is not to prove that malnutrition is so widespread and costly (this you either are familiar with or must accept on faith as a fact). However, my purpose is to point out some of the reasons this is true, and to convince you how important school food service is to the solution of this serious problem. I hope you will leave Minneapolis with the determination to do something about it!

CAUSES OF MALNUTRITION

Why do we have so much malnutrition in a modern country like the United States? I feel that basically there are six reasons, outlined below.

1. Because of poverty and/or lack of food. (This may have economic reasons or it may be far more complex. Included in this category are aged or handicapped persons without easy access to food sources. Also included are children, for example, not able to participate in school food service programs. The lack of home gardens is a factor, among others.)
2. Because of negative social, cultural, and religious factors. (Examples of this are extreme food faddists, eating habits of school children and their peers, and those of persons eating unusual vegetarian or "macrobiotic" diets. Alcoholism has a role in this cause also.)
3. Because of certain negative food industry factors. (Such as lack of sufficient food fortification. Also I do not feel that America's food manufacturing industry, as a whole, has shown much real interest in good nutrition of the American public. Notable exceptions

to this are the traditional food industries such as dairy, meat, poultry and egg, fruits and vegetables, and the cereal industry, but they are not doing all they should.) This point is expanded below.

4. Because of lack of nutrition education of the public. (This starts in our schools and is a subject which I consider most important and spend a lot of time on. You will recall the slogan used by international food agencies: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.")
5. Because of lack of motivating factors. (People will not eat properly unless they are motivated to do so -- even if they know better! Look at the Saturday morning T.V. commercials to get an understanding of factors in food motivation. Or, look at the overweight persons about us, or try to understand why some persons misuse alcoholic beverages and other foods when they know better.)
6. Because of lack of recognition of the needs of nutrition by our national leaders (and because of inadequate numbers of persons with proper nutrition training in key positions in our schools, offices of education, and in our food industry -- related to the above).

To expand on point 3 above, we cannot put all the blame on our excellent food industry for our country's nutrition problems. The fault lies more in ourselves and the kind of foods which we as consumers eat and demand on our store shelves. We drink more soft drinks than milk. As a nation, we eat more candy than eggs (when compared on a water-free basis). We eat more sugar in this country than our total intake of fruits and vegetables and eggs

(again on a water-free basis)! In fact, we can call our nation's eating habits "terrible." Let me explain further.

Using U.S.D.A. figures (data from the U.S.D.A.'s National Food Situation), I have recalculated what the average American ate in 1970 on a dry weight basis, so that all foods can be fairly compared without taking their water content into consideration. When this is done we find an annual average per capita use of:

EMPTY CALORIE FOODS	POUNDS IN 1970
Table sugar	102
Fats and oils *	53
White flour	100
Corn sugar	14
Milled rice	7
Total	276 pounds

* This includes margarine, shortening, lard, butter, and cooking and salad oils -- not the fat normally present in natural foods.

This compares with the annual per capita use of the following traditional foods:

TRADITIONAL FOODS	POUNDS IN 1970
Meat (beef, pork, sheep)	74
Poultry	15
Fish	3
Eggs	14
Milk	34
Cheese	7

Ice cream	5
All fruits	18
Potatoes	25
Vegetables (all others)	24
Whole cereals	21
Peanuts, beans, others	19
Total	259 pounds

You can draw your own conclusions from these important figures, but to me the lessons here are many. For instance, over half of the calories which we eat come from sugar and fat ("empty calorie" foods) plus white flour -- the combination of which supplies only a small portion of most of the 45 essential nutrients which we must have in our diets. Our total intake, on an average, of these essential nutrients is not very much above the Recommended Dietary Allowances of the National Academy of Sciences. My greatest concern is for the approximately half of our population who eat less than half of the average and for that fourth of our population who walk a very risky road nutritionally speaking. Of concern also is that the situation seems to be getting worse rather than better.

WHAT YOU CAN DO —

I consider our nation's school food service programs to be the first line of defense in the battle against malnutrition -- at least until the time when some of the other lines of defense can be better drawn.

Until all the recommendations of the recent White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health can be fulfilled, we have no better alternative

it seems to me, than to provide "free" food services for all of our nation's 50 million children in our schools. This should be provided as part of the total educational experience in quiet lunchrooms, with adequate facilities and staffs, and with far more interest and cooperation of teachers, administrators, and parents. I feel that the cost to society of free school lunches, in the long run, is far less than the costs of poor health and development of children when lunches are not provided.

I trust that each one of you will become familiar with the recommendations of the White House Conference (available from the Government Printing Office) and work toward accepting them in your home communities. In terms of nutrition needs, besides free school food services for all children, there should be a well-trained nutrition curriculum consultant in every school district and, especially, in our regional and state offices of education. All teachers in elementary schools and most secondary school teachers (as well as school food service personnel!) should have some training in nutrition. Unbiased nutrition curriculum materials and teaching aids should be freely available to all teachers.

I urge you, as school food service personnel, to go back to your schools, and following the leads of many innovators among you, work with your school teachers in carrying the nutrition message to all school children -- and through them to their parents -- in all the ways possible.

Good nutrition and provision of adequate nutritious food is not only essential to good health but it is a matter of life and death. It is the world's number one problem today -- along with war and population control. Good nutrition means providing all the 45 essential nutrients in adequate amounts to each ch ild with care and love -- one of our best signs of a civilized society.